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RESURRECTION OF JESUS



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By

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INTRODUCTION

THERE is scarcely another fact in the Christian Faith that has caused so much difficulty to the belief of the modern man as that of the Resurrection of Jesus. The advance of science in our days seems to leave no room for miracle, especially for such a miracle as the resurrection of the dead to a new bodily life. And yet the question here is not of a miracle which could be put aside as unhistorical, without essential deduction from the apostolic Gospel. The church has always considered the resurrection of Jesus as a principal part of her message. The apostle Paul occasionally describes Christian saving faith in the words: "Thou believest in thine heart that God hath raised Jesus from the dead" (Rom. 10. 9); and he also says directly: "If Christ be not risen then is our preaching vain . . . ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (1 Cor. 15. 14, 17, 18). In like manner among all other New Testament writers, the resurrec-

tion of Jesus stands at the center of their testimony, and without the preaching of the Risen One the Christian church would have been an impossibility. To give it up means nothing less than to give up the apostolic Gospel. Should one try to build a new Christianity from what is left, such a religion would hardly show the victorious power in the struggle with sin and death which is inherent in the preaching of the apostles. Consideration for consequences cannot, indeed, prevent us from abandoning a traditional idea if it does not express the truth. The more closely the question under discussion affects our holiest interests, the more important is it that we should be kept from illusions. On the other hand, the blessed effect, which proceeded from the apostolic preaching, warns us against rashly giving up a belief in what is perhaps disputed, but not refuted. At any rate, the interest of thought and faith demands imperatively a serious and conscientious examination. We can not and dare not close our eyes to the truth, but just as little should we be induced to accept as truth that which, at the most, may possibly be a mere hypothe-

sis. Not science but faith will have the last word in this question. Investigation can only mark out the boundaries of the real and knowable and consider the possible explanations of established facts. In this, however, it renders a valuable service to faith by guarding it from the influence of preconceived opinions, instead of reality. A one-sided cultivation of critical acumen and an unwarranted neglect of historical inquiry, are alike dangerous to the continuance of genuine belief.

I

THE SOURCES OF THE RESURRECTION HISTORY

AN examination of belief in the resurrection of Jesus cannot be made without a critical study of its sources. In ascertaining an historical fact, one will first of all look for the accounts of eye-witnesses. Now it is true that the Resurrection of Jesus was not seen by any human eye. In later apocryphal writings only is any other statement made. The disciples saw only the empty sepulcher and the Risen One. In this respect it seems best to start from the first and fourth Gospels which, according to ecclesiastical tradition, were composed by apostles. But the Greek form in which the first Gospel is extant is not from the apostle Matthew.¹ Ac-

¹ This is perhaps a little too strong (see *Expositor's Greek Testament*, p. 43). To Papias may be added Irenæus and also Pantænus (Eusebius, *Eccles. History*, v. 10); but the loss of the Hebrew Gospel, the authority of the Greek Text in the Church, similarity to the other Gospels and originality of style forbid a pronounced opinion.—
EDITOR.

according to the testimony of Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia (about 130 A. D.), Matthew composed his work in the Hebrew, that is, according to the usage of that time, in the Aramaic. In how far our Greek Gospel of Matthew is a literal translation or a free recast of this Aramaic book, is a much disputed question, and as to details, is difficult to answer. In the history of the Resurrection strong considerations can be urged against the supposition that we have a first hand account by one of the twelve. Compared with its parallels the Easter-story of Matthew's Gospel surprises us by its incompleteness, and when one compares Matthew's narrative of the women's walk to the sepulcher with that of Mark he does not gain the impression that the greater originality belongs to Matthew. A proper starting point for the inquiry is found here.

It is different with the fourth Gospel. Its composition by the apostle John is so easily and forcibly attested by ecclesiastical tradition, that its genuineness would never have been doubted had not one imagined that it was necessitated by internal evidence. But criticism has not succeeded in setting aside

the testimony of the ancient church, and despite the undeniable differences which distinguish the fourth Gospel from the first three, it must still be considered as the work of the apostle John. As is generally acknowledged, it is the latest of the canonical Gospel writings not written until the end of the first century. And the question may be asked, whether the recollection of the apostle has not been darkened in the course of the decades, and whether the one or the other point has not been shifted in his consciousness by the tradition which became ruling in the church. At any rate, an understanding with opponents is precluded from the start when decisive weight is put upon a work whose genuineness is zealously controverted. Thus it will be well to examine the extant documents according to the chronological order of their origin.

THE ACCOUNT OF PAUL

The earliest document which contains a detailed account of the Easter events is a section in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, 15. 3-8. The denial of the future resurrec-

tion of the believers on the part of some Christians at Corinth, induces the apostle to fall back upon the resurrection of Jesus. As matters of fact which in the first lines he had already delivered to the Church he mentions the death of Jesus for our sins according to the Scriptures, his burial and his rising again on the third day according to the Scriptures. Then he tells of the six appearances of the Risen Lord, which he evidently gives according to their chronological order. The first is that to Cephas; then that to the Twelve; then one to more than five hundred brethren, the greater part of whom were still alive and thus in a condition to corroborate his testimony; after that he was seen of James, then of all the apostles, whereby probably are meant not only the Twelve but also other original witnesses of Christ, as for example, the brethren of the Lord (1 Cor. 9. 5). The last of the series forms the Christophany before Damascus, which Paul himself had experienced. There can be no doubt that altogether the apostle intends to enumerate the most important appearances of the Risen Jesus. But one overstrains the sig-

nificance of this account when historicity is denied to all self-revelations of the Lord not mentioned therein. We are not obliged to suppose that Paul narrated all that he knew, or that he knew all that actually took place. He reminds the Corinthians only of that which he had already communicated to them (1 Cor. 15. 1 seq.), and only mentions manifestations of the Risen One to such persons as by virtue of their authority and position, or because of other circumstances, could be considered as especially trustworthy witnesses for the resurrection of Jesus. This is the main point with him. On this account he does not tell whether the Risen One entered into intercourse with the disciples and what was the issue of it. Only by completely mistaking the connection can far-reaching inferences be drawn from the silence of the apostles. This is also the case with reference to the fact that he does not mention the empty sepulcher. When Paul, in support of the bodily resurrection of Christians reminded them that the dead and buried Christ was raised on the third day, none of the readers of the Epistle could think of anything

else than of a bodily coming forth of Christ from the grave. The fact is that for Paul himself the empty grave has no special significance as evidence. The positive fact that the Risen Jesus had presented himself bodily to his own is so decisive for him, that he does not think at all of the empty grave.

Paul probably wrote the first Epistle to the Corinthians in 57 A. D. What he records in it of the resurrection of Jesus is of a much earlier date. Five years earlier the apostle in his missionary address at Corinth had preached just this which he now attests to the congregation, and the emphasis which he places on his message of the need of salvation, precludes the idea of a possible change in his views (1 Cor. 15. 1-3, 11-20). We must go back still further in order to get at the source of his preaching. As in another place (1 Cor. 11. 23) he refers here also (1 Cor. 15. 3) expressly to the information which he received. Of whom he received it he indicates when he affirms (verse 11) that his message is in full agreement with that of the first apostles. He certainly did not begin his extensive activity

among the Gentiles without being perfectly clear as to the content of his message. Thus on his visit to Jerusalem three years after his conversion, about 38 A. D., he may have already received accurate information about the Easter events. At that time, according to Gal. 1. 18-20, he personally became acquainted with two men of the apostolic circle, Peter and James the brother of the Lord, and spent fourteen days in intercourse with them.¹ To them as his authorities for his knowledge, we are referred without further statement because among the appearances of the Risen Lord to individuals of whom we read in 1. Cor. 15, those to Peter and John are specified. What he learned from these men other members of the primitive church, no doubt, confirmed and supplemented. The supposition is obvious that men like Andronicus and Junia, who were converted before Paul and were known missionaries (Rom. 16. 7), belonged to the five hundred to whose testimony Paul refers (1 Cor. 15. 6). But, however this may be, certain it is that in 1 Cor. 15 Paul imparts, not his subjective thoughts about the resur-

¹ See note at end of chapter.

rection of Jesus, but the accredited teaching of the primitive church. This doctrine was for him an unimpeachable quantity. As the disciple of the rabbis was bent on handing down the expositions and legal decisions of his teacher, still more was it a concern of the apostle to propagate conscientiously that which was delivered to him of the words and deeds of Jesus. On this account also is he so certain of his agreement with the early apostles on this subject. After this it is evident that much importance is attached to the account of Paul. In it we have a deposit of the oldest doctrine of the primitive church attested by the mouth of her most prominent authorities.

THE FIRST THREE GOSPELS

It is our object to center upon the difficult problem How the peculiar relation of agreement and diversity between the first three Gospels can be explained. We cannot entirely ignore the question. There is scarcely any point where the accounts of the Gospels differ so much as in the Easter story. A genial expositor, the late F. Godet, aptly remarked: "We could compare here the four

accounts with four friends, each of whom, after having traveled together, being near the end of the journey takes the road to his own home." In the Bible it is not so obvious, because the Gospel of Mark had an addition which is a combination of the Easter narratives from the three other Gospels, namely that in section 16. 9-20.

It may be taken as a settled result of textual criticism that the Gospel of Mark breaks off with 16. 8. The coincidence of inner and outer reasons precludes here every doubt. One can, indeed, hardly imagine that the evangelist intended to narrate the walk of the women to the sepulcher without adding an account of the appearance of the Risen Jesus, and the words (verse 8): "The women did not say anything to any man, for they were afraid," as a close of the book, are just as unsatisfactory, as contradictory in themselves. Whether Mark was prevented by outward circumstances from finishing his notes, or whether the original close of the Gospel had been lost before its publication, cannot be decided. But we know from an ancient Armenian version of the Bible, that the section 16. 9-20, in some

copies of the Gospel of Mark, had the superscription "by the presbyter Aristion." From this we assume that a Christian of that name is undoubtedly meant, whom Eusebius, in his Ecclesiastical History (III, 39. 4, 5, 7, 14), mentions as a personal disciple of Jesus. In order to round up somewhat the strange close of the Gospel of Mark, some one added to the book, at the end of the first or beginning of the second century, from notes of Aristion, the section Mark 16. 9-20. Whether Aristion himself witnessed the Easter event we know not; but the presumption is obvious that this account is dependent upon our Gospels (comp. Mark 16. 9-11 with John 20. 11-18 and Luke 8. 2; Mark 16. 12 seq., with Luke 24. 13-35; Mark 16. 14-18 with Matt. 28. 16-20). At all events he stood near enough to the events to have an independent knowledge of them.

Setting aside Mark 16. 9-20, we get at once a different view of the mutual relation of the Gospels. Whereas in the narrative of the walk of the women to the sepulcher of Jesus the first three Gospels in general agree, in spite of many differences in detail, Mat-

thew and Luke are entirely divergent. If one imagines that he must derive the relationship of the first three Gospels merely from a common use or oral tradition, the great difference in the Easter story cannot be explained. It is otherwise when one presupposes a common literary foundation. Two things must be considered as very probable: In the first place that the Gospel of Mark belongs to the sources mentioned by Luke (I. 1); secondly it must be supposed that of the first two Gospels, the one formed the copy for the other. A more definite statement of the mutual relation is not required for our purpose. The much agitated question whether Matthew made use of Mark, or *vice versa*, can be left open at present. Under all circumstances it must be admitted that the close agreement of certain parts of Matthew and Luke is mediated by Mark. Thus it cannot cause surprise that with the close of Mark the point is reached where the various agreements of the first and third Gospels cease and thence differ. Matthew speaks briefly of an appearance of the Lord to the women in Jerusalem, but in a most detailed way of one to the

twelve disciples on a mountain in Galilee. He thus follows the direction toward which Mark pointed when in chap. 16. 7, he mentions the word of the angel who holds out to the disciples the prospect of a manifestation of the Lord in Galilee. Luke (ch. 24) mentions three or four appearances of the Lord in Jerusalem and its neighborhood; once to the disciples on their way to Emmaus (verses 13-35), one to Peter (verse 34), one to the apostles (verses 36-49), and one in verse 50 seq. Although it may seem as if the evangelist was of the opinion that everything which is narrated in chapter 24 happened on the same day yet it is not difficult to perceive that in reality this is not his meaning. Since the Emmaus-disciples only undertook the walk back to Jerusalem (lasting three hours) after sunset, and Jesus appeared again to the disciples in the evening, he could not have led them to Bethany until about midnight, and no reasonable motive is given for this nocturnal journey. Luke here, where the end of his manuscript no doubt demanded brevity, intended to indicate only what he wished to state more fully in the Acts of the Apostles (I. 1-11),

namely: that Jesus, during a certain length of time was repeatedly seen by the disciples, and that on the Mount of Olives finally departed from them. For the history of the Resurrection, especially chapter 24. 13-25, Luke seems to have had a Jerusalem authority whose traces can otherwise also be noticed in his Gospel. This must be taken into account in considering why he only recorded the appearances of Christ in Jerusalem.

JOHN

The fourth Gospel, whose composition by the apostle John we have already affirmed, is lacking in a uniform statement in the Easter history. To the original extent of the Gospel belongs chapter 20. This is clearly seen from the closing remark (verses 30, 31). Chapter 21 is an addition which mediately or immediately also belongs to the apostle John, but which was added later. In chapter 20 the evangelist describes first how by the order of things which he saw in the empty sepulcher, he was led to believe in the resurrection of Jesus (verses 1-10), a section which bears the stamp of personal

experience. He then describes the three appearances of the Risen One of which that to Mary Magdalene (verses 11-18) and that to the apostles, excepting Thomas (verses 10-25), certainly took place in Jerusalem. On account of the similarity of the situation, the same will probably also hold good of the third appearance, to all the disciples (verses 26-29). The addition (chapter 21) mentions an appearance of the Lord in Galilee by the Sea of Tiberias in the presence of seven disciples. The relation of chapter 21 to chapter 20 is highly instructive. It not only shows that the evangelists attach no value whatever to the outward situation, for John suddenly transfers the reader from Jerusalem to the Galilean sea without any waste of words, but it causes us rather to perceive how the evangelists in the selection of their material, proceeded freely just as the purpose of their statement requires. According to chapter 20. 30 seq., John intended to bring the readers of his book to faith in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God. On this account he could give his Gospel a more appropriate close than the history of Thomas, which brings before the eyes how

the last and most obdurate doubter in the circle of the disciples falls down adoringly before the Lord. Had a special reason not caused the addition of chapter 21, we had known nothing of the appearance in Galilee of which John knew, as also of the appearances of the Lord in Jerusalem. It is moreover remarkable that John, in recounting the appearances of the Risen Lord (21. 14) considers only those to the circle of the disciples, but pays no attention to that to Mary Magdalene (20. 11-18). This is a clear suggestion how the enumeration of the appearances by Paul (1 Cor. 15. 5-8) is to be judged.

APOCRYPHA

Of the apocryphal gospels, only the preserved fragments of the gospel of the Hebrews (originated about 135), and of the gospel of Peter (about 150) can, at the most, be taken into consideration. The former mentions an appearance of the Risen to James; but what it states beyond (1 Cor. 15. 7) is historically worthless. Moreover, the latter gives a narrative strikingly bizarre in its fantastic description as compared with

the statement of the canonical gospels; and the supposition is not unfounded that the author of this apocryphal writing may have used the original closing verses of Mark.

It is by no means dogmatical prejudice when a sharp distinction is made between canonical and apocryphal gospels. The secondary contents of the latter, as is generally acknowledged, would justify this. Moreover, such a distinction is required since the apocryphal gospels, for example, the gospel of Peter, notoriously utilize the canonical gospels, without, however, considering their relatively later time of composition, or offering any guarantee that their own additions and changes are to be traced back to anything else than the fancy and tendency of their authors. The gospel of the Hebrews, on account of its possible relation to the Aramaic original of Matthew, and because of its Palestinian origin, might perhaps claim a higher estimate. Positively it contains nothing of the history of the Resurrection which could be regarded as an enrichment of the canonical tradition. Compare with the apocryphal narratives the account of Aristion, which was added later to

the Gospel of Mark (Mark 16. 9-20), and one will admire the wisdom of the church in her selection of the descriptions of the life of Jesus appointed for religious use.

RESULT

This short survey of the sources exhibits an almost surprising fullness of different narratives and varying accounts. It would seem almost impossible to elicit from the protean and in part contradictory statements the course of events. This is only the case so long as one considers the accounts as of equal value, and thinks that each individual letter of these must be emphasized. But the picture becomes at once a different one when one places the individual narratives beside each other, seeks out the main streams of tradition, and tries to obtain the understanding of the individual from the conclusive point of view. An example may suffice. All four Gospels speak of the women going to the sepulcher. Putting their narratives mosaically together, we meet with so many diversities that the work cannot be carried out without the greatest artificiality.

It is different when one distinguishes the different branches of tradition. The tradition of the first three Gospels has lost the recollection, preserved by John, that Mary Magdalene went twice to the sepulcher of the Lord, once in company with the other woman (John 20. 1 seq.; observe "we know not," verse 2); the second time with Peter and John (John 20. 3-18).

What Mark (16. 1-8) tells of the experience of the women at the sepulcher occurs, meanwhile, between the first and second walks of Magdalene, and his account is in so far only lacking as he keeps silent about the first return of Magdalene to Jerusalem, thus making it appear that her experiences agreed with those of the other women. Matthew (28. 1-10) combines the tradition of Mark with that represented by John; hence he narrates an appearance of the Lord to the women, whereas, according to John, the question was only of one Christophany to Magdalene. For the same reason he makes the women speak of their experience at the sepulcher; whereas, according to Mark 16. 8, they kept silent, and the Magdalene at first only spoke of her perceiving the

empty sepulcher (John 20. 2), and afterward told of seeing the Lord (20. 18).

In Luke (24. 1-11) a like combination is found insomuch as he combines the record of Mark with recollections which he drew from the Jerusalem source peculiar to him (comp. 24. 22-24). Thus John, by offering quite naturally the key for the understanding of the events, proves to be the best-informed eye-witness. Mark evidently records what Mary the mother of James narrated; while Matthew and Luke also record, not their own inventions, but the account of Mark with other traditions, whereby a certain confusion originates.

For the reconstruction of the resurrection story Paul and John must, in the first instance, be considered as authorities, the former conveying the oldest teaching of Peter and James, the latter an eye-witness of most of the events. Mark, because his narrative breaks off with 16. 8, is so far to be used for the appearances of the Lord, as inferences from the intended continuation of the narratives can be drawn from verses 1-8; but it is obvious that the greatest care is here required lest one fall into arbitrary in-

terpretations. That Luke had a good tradition in his special source is attested by its harmony with John, only that we are not in a position to judge how far he allows this source to speak. Finally Matthew also had reliable information, but is little concerned about the outward details of the events.

[NOTE. The verb used by Paul in verse 18, *ιστορῆσαι*, is very suggestive. The word *see* in A. V. does not express its meaning, nor does the rendering *to become acquainted*, usually given by commentators, fully convey the idea intended. Paul does not say he went up to Jerusalem to *see* Peter, nor *to become acquainted with* Peter; such was not his real main purpose at all; but he went up *to history* Peter, to obtain facts from, to question, examine Peter. The verb *ιστορέω*, *historeo*, signifies to ask, to inquire into, to find out what one has to relate as a fact; and the noun, such knowledge as is obtained by inquiry, a written account of facts, *history*. Paul then went up to Jerusalem to examine Peter concerning *historical facts* in the life of Christ. —EDITOR.]

II

THE HISTORICALLY DEMONSTRABLE FACT

WHATEVER one may think of the miracle of the Easter story, he must, at all events acknowledge that it is founded upon some fact. An examination of the actual circumstances would be impossible save that it is accurately ascertained what can be found out as historically true. Of course the opinion of the value of the records has here a decisive influence; but it should be possible to obtain some fixed points from which further inquiry can proceed. In the following we shall put together what appears to us to be historically indisputable. At the same time we will confine ourselves to the essential, that which is decisive for proving the fact of the resurrection. An inquiry into all details of the Gospel accounts is outside the setting of our present task, and it is therefore not our intention to give up as unhistorical what is not here mentioned. We only wish to obtain a basis which shall

make a decision possible on the essential contents of the Easter story.

1. It is generally acknowledged that the disciples became deeply dejected when Jesus was taken and crucified. As the entire Gospel narrative attests, before Easter they could not accommodate themselves to the suffering of their Master. Unto the end they showed surprise and opposition to the repeated passion prophecies of the Lord, and obstinately warded off the thought of his death. This fact must be adhered to even when the announcement of the passion has to be considered as something additional. The description of the behavior of the disciples would only show how difficult it was for them to understand then and even afterward the suffering fate of the Master. The flight of the Twelve in Gethsemane (Mark 14. 50), the denial of Peter (Mark 14. 66-72) and the aloofness of most disciples at the crucifixion (Mark 15. 40 seq.; Luke 23. 49) prove that the events of those critical days had completely surprised them. How far the thought of a resurrection of Jesus was from them even on the Easter morn is seen in the intention of the women to

anoint the Lord (Mark 16. 1). The disposition of the disciples on the days after the crucifixion of Jesus is best characterized by that inimitable word of the Emmaus pilgrims (Luke 24. 21): "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." Their belief in the prophetic mission of Jesus did not disappear, nor their love for him; but the trust in his Messianic calling is gone, or, is at least deeply shaken. That in all this we have a faithful record, later history confirms. As for the Pharisees, Saul (comp. Gal. 3. 13), and so for the Jews in general, the Crucifixion was an offence from which they turned away with loathing (1 Cor. 1. 23; Gal. 5. 11). It required a complete reversal of national views, hopes and feelings for the Jew to surmount the stumbling-block of the cross. Hence we can hardly realize to ourselves the wretched despondency and despair in the days before Easter.

2. It is equally certain that the disciples some time afterward became firmly convinced of the resurrection of Jesus. The whole primitive church is founded on this faith. It cannot have originated in the

course of historical development, but must ever have been the common property of Christendom. All writers of the New Testament presuppose it as a matter of Gospel, or expressly attest it.

3. Faith in the resurrection of Jesus was sustained from the beginning by the conviction that the Risen Lord had repeatedly appeared to his people and had presented himself to them alive. How these appearances are to be explained is a question by itself; their actuality cannot be denied. The account of Paul in 1 Cor. 15. 3-8 vouches for it, and it cannot be touched by any scepticism. Though the records, in numbering the appearances, may differ much, it must not be forgotten that none of them claims to be complete, especially as each selects material according to certain points of view. Even diversities which cannot be harmonized, can only prove that the tradition was not clear as to details; not however that no appearances had taken place at all. But we are not lacking in a considerable stock of common recollections.

Of the appearances mentioned by Paul (1 Cor. 15. 5-8) some can certainly be

identified, others not without probability, with those mentioned in the Gospels. Thus, as witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus are mentioned: Peter (Luke 24. 34); the Twelve (Luke 24. 36-49; John 20. 19-23; Mark 16. 14-18); perhaps the five hundred brethren (Matt. 28. 16-20); in the gospel of the Hebrews only James; probably all the apostles (Luke 24. 50, 51; Acts 1. 3-11). Passed over by Paul and mentioned only in the Gospels are the appearances to Mary Magdalene (John 20. 11-18; Matt. 28. 9 seq.; Mark 16. 9-11); to the Emmaus pilgrims (Luke 24. 13-33; Mark 16. 12 seq.); to the Twelve, including Thomas (John 20. 26-29); to the seven disciples by the Galilean sea (John 21). That Christophanies of a more private, pastoral character happened to some disciples recorded in tradition cannot be strange. More conspicuous is the passing over of self-manifestations of the Lord before larger circles. One was evidently satisfied to assert that the Lord appeared to a number of appointed witnesses. The certain recollection of individual cases was more valuable than a great number of testimonies difficult to control. For the rest,

traits of an individual character are sometimes generalized and combined with the appearances before larger circles. Thus the doubt of Thomas (John 20. 23 seq.) may be referred to in Matt. 28. 16; Luke 24, 37; Mark 16. 11, 13, 14, but in the absence of details that cannot be stated positively as a fact.

4. Though often disputed, yet it is historically certain that the disciples believed they saw the Risen Jesus in the same body which was laid in the sepulcher, but that it had become spiritualized. All accounts speak of a bodily resurrection; nevertheless, the identity of the dead body with the risen body is more strongly emphasized in the Gospels, but by Paul its glorification. According to all four Gospels the women at the sepulcher learn that Jesus is no longer there, but is risen. This can only be understood as a bodily resurrection. Mary recognizes the Lord by the sound of his voice (John 20. 16); Jesus shows unto his disciples his hands and his side (John 20. 20, 27; Luke 24. 39); he allows men to touch his body (Matt. 28. 9; Luke 24. 39; John 20. 27); he even eats with them to convince them of the reality of

his bodily resurrection (Luke 24. 41-43; Acts 10. 41). Though these traits might lead to the idea that the Risen had returned into the former earthly, human life, yet there are others which point to a glorified existence. Jesus suddenly appears among his disciples, the doors being shut (Luke 24. 36; John 20. 19, 26) and disappears just as unexpectedly (Luke 24. 31). The disciples associate no more with him as formerly; they only know him when he makes himself known (Luke 24. 31, 35; John 20. 16) and observe a remarkable reserve toward him (John 21). This is explained from his having already entered into his glory (Luke 24. 26). According to Paul the Risen One has a "glorious body" (Phil. 3. 21), a spiritual body, serving the spirit entirely as organ (1 Cor. 15. 44); but, changed and glorified, it is nevertheless the same which was once laid in the grave. This is especially clear from 1 Cor. 15. 3, 4. To the statement that Jesus was buried, the apostle immediately adds the other, that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Burial and resurrection stand in such close relation that

no other idea is possible than that Jesus rose with the body which was formerly buried. This is confirmed by other expressions of the apostle. He repeatedly calls baptism a being buried and raised with Christ (Rom. 6. 3 seq.; Col. 2. 12). The analogy is only appropriate in so far that it presupposes the raising of the body of Jesus which was buried. When the candidate for baptism, according to the rite of antiquity, was plunged into the water, was, as it were, buried in it, and afterward came out of the water as a new man and yet as the same person, this act represented the burial and raising of Jesus. No thought of a coarse materiality of the resurrection body comes to the apostle from this line of reflection. As he expected that at the coming of Christ the living believers would experience a transformation of their bodies, he also presupposed that the dead body of the Lord had at its raising been glorified in a higher form of existence. It is possible that the recollection of Paul that he once saw the heavenly One may have given a peculiar stamp to the picture of the glorified Christ; yet he agrees with the evangelists that the

earthly body of Jesus was not decayed in the grave, but was raised and glorified.

5. In closest relation to what has just been said, stands the certainty of the disciples that the sepulcher of Jesus was found empty. The disputers of the resurrection of Jesus differ in their opinion as to whether we have to deal here with an historical fact; but they in an unconceivable manner make their own position difficult by not admitting the empty sepulcher, since they thereby deprive themselves of the strongest starting-point for a natural explanation of the belief of the disciples. That the body of Jesus had not been interred in some unknown corner, but was honorably buried, is beyond question. Romans and Jews did not refuse a decent burial to criminals whose relatives asked for the body. Concerning the burial of Jesus in the neighborhood of Golgotha, the four Gospels give an account perfectly harmonious in the main, and Paul also accounts the burial of Jesus among the fixed beliefs of the primitive church (1 Cor. 15. 4; comp. Rom. 6. 4; Col. 2. 12). Mark distinctly states how the women carefully beheld where Jesus was laid (15. 47), and

were troubled on the Easter morning because they were unable to roll away the stone from the door of the sepulcher (16. 3); one of them, no doubt being well acquainted with the locality. Again, we read in all the Gospels that the women who went very early on the Easter morning to the sepulcher found it empty. Luke (24. 12, 24) and John (20. 1-10) attest the same of such as belonged to the apostolic circle. Even the enemies of Jesus bear here an unmistakable witness to the fact. It has never been objected to the resurrection preaching of the disciples that the body of Jesus was still in the sepulcher as Peter (Acts 2. 29), in explanation of Psalm 16, refers to David's sepulcher and which naturally would have been in Jerusalem. The manufactured report spread by the Jews, that the disciples had stolen the body (Matt. 28. 13, 15), shows that the fact that the sepulcher was empty could not even be denied. What is objected to in the historical account of the Gospels on this point is of no importance. He is mistaken who thinks that the news of the empty sepulcher would have induced the apostles, or perhaps a mass of inquisitive people to

visit the sepulcher. It may have been a few hours before the disciples, who hardly lived together, had been informed of the experience of Mary Magdalene; besides the fear of the Jews might have prevented many of them from showing themselves in public. But after the first appearance of the Risen had taken place, the attention of the disciples was turned from the empty sepulcher to the Lord himself, and there was no need to seek the proof of the resurrection of the Lord in the disappearance of the body. This is illustrated by the account of Paul (1 Cor. 15. 3 seq.), who here certainly sets forth the knowledge of the church, and not a supposedly more spiritual subjective opinion differing from the view of the Palestinians.

6. It is of noteworthy importance that the oldest statement placed the resurrection of Jesus, and thus also the first appearance of the Risen One, on the third day after the Crucifixion. The *third* day is the most strongly attested date of the resurrection. Paul refers for it to the belief of the congregation. All four Gospels at least, preclude a later date, stating that on the Easter morning it became known to the disciples or

the women, not only that the sepulcher was empty, but also that the Lord had risen (Mark 16. 1-8). Matthew and Luke mention the third day directly as the date of the resurrection by the prediction of Jesus, that he would rise again "after three days" (Mark 8. 31; 9. 31; 10. 34), the announcement of the resurrection "on the third day," has reference to the fact of its fulfillment (Matt. 16. 21; 17. 23; 20. 19; Luke 9. 22; 18. 33; especially 24. 7 and 46). Another witness for this date is the Christian celebration of Sunday, the beginning of which reaches back to the apostolic age. That it was borrowed from Babylonian or Persian sun-cult is out of the question. Though there may be more trustworthy traces of a distinction of the Sabbath above the other days of the week in pre-Christian heathendom or Judaism than is really the case, the Christian Sunday celebration has, at all events, nothing to do with Sun-worship. Not even the astrological name "Sunday" was used by the Christians of the first centuries. In the New Testament the festive day is called after truly Jewish usage, "the first day of the week" (1 Cor. 16. 2; Acts

20. 7), or is already called "the Lord's Day" (Rev. 1. 10), which is its truly Christian notation. When the church transferred its religious celebration to the first day of the week, and not to the Sabbath of Jewish custom, it must have had a special reason; and according to the unanimous testimony of the church fathers, it was the resurrection of Jesus on the first day of the week—the third day after the Crucifixion.

The effort to derive this particular date from heathenish notions, perhaps from the idea of Parseeism, that after death the soul still hovers three days and three nights about the body, is just as abortive as the falling back upon Old Testament passages like Jonah 2. 1, or Jesus's predictions like Matt. 12. 40. The question is here always of "three days" instead of the "third day," and Hos. 6. 2, "after two days will he revive us; in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live again in his sight" has too much the stamp of a proverbial mode of expression to fix definitely the time of the resurrection of Jesus. Besides, this passage played no part whatever in the Scripture proof of the oldest church. Not even the

finding of the empty sepulcher made it possible to fix the time of the resurrection of Jesus, since no one knew when the sepulcher had become empty. The dating of the resurrection on the third day finds a satisfactory explanation only in this, that on this day the appearances of the Risen One took place. This is also attested by all three Gospels, which in general record the self-manifestations of the Risen Jesus.

7. From the record we learn that the first appearance of the Lord took place at Jerusalem. It is at the present time almost generally conceded that the disciples had been there on the Easter morning; this is clear from Mark 16. 7. They would then have learned that the sepulcher of Jesus had been found empty (John 20. 2). The original silence of the women (Mark 16. 8) may not have lasted very long. Having learned of the empty tomb they would not have left Jerusalem at once, especially as the Feast of Unleavened Bread detained them. Thus the circumstances are entirely in accord with that which is demanded by the date of the resurrection, and is attested by Matthew (28. 9 seq.), Luke (24) and John (20. 11 seq.),

that the first appearance of the Risen Lord took place in Jerusalem. When in Mark (16. 7) the word of the angel expressly promises to the disciples a seeing of the Lord in Galilee, this does not preclude that appearances took place also in Jerusalem. A prediction is not necessarily an account of what happened, especially since the word of the angel contains only a reproduction of Jesus's own declaration (Mark 14. 28). What is supposed in Mark 16. 7 finds its answer in the assumption that important appearances of Jesus took place also in Galilee. The one-sided emphasis on such a one in Matthew (28. 7, 10, 16), can not preclude Jerusalem Christophanies, because through the absence of almost any historical individual traits the text in Matt. 28. 16-20 makes the impression of having been condensed. The possibility at any rate exists that "the 'either-or' of the statements resolves into an 'as-well-as' of the facts." That the disciples, at the end of the feast, returned to their Galilean homes, is a matter of course, as on the other hand the founding of the church in Jerusalem proves that the abode of the disciples in Galilee was of long duration. On this account the self-

manifestations of the Risen One there could easily recede in tradition. The room for appearances in Jerusalem and Galilee is certainly warranted by history.

8. During how long a period Christophanies took place cannot be accurately ascertained. According to Acts 1. 3, it was a space of forty days, but forty may be meant as a round number. Paul considers the appearance which happened to him as the last of all (1 Cor. 15. 8). The Christophanies came to an end in a comparatively short time, without considering a repetition of them as necessary or possible.

The alleged points only show the ground lines of the resurrection history. As to the details many things remain uncertain and indistinct. This is in part due to the already described state of the sources, in part also to the nature of the events in question. We have not a connected series of events to deal with. Jesus no longer dwelt in the midst of his disciples. He appears to them only now and then, and these experiences are always during special hours of rest. Then their whole interest is concentrated upon the center of the event, the person of

the Lord, and all accessory circumstances recede. In the fragmentary character of the narratives the peculiarity of the events is reflected. It were unreasonable to expect a full account where, as a matter of fact, single pictures only can be offered. What remains of minor contradictions in the parallel accounts, aside from this, goes hardly beyond that which can be perceived in the whole history of the Gospels. Where human observation and description participate in the presentation of a course of history, we shall always find differences in the accounts, especially where the narrators are eye-witnesses. But one need not therefore doubt the credibility of the record. A judge of very long experience and famous for his knowledge of men once said that perfect agreement of the witnesses is always a proof that, though they did not agree in their individual statements, yet it harmonized them as to the main fact. Whoever exercises a minute critique on such details and uses it to discredit the recorded events, shows no historical tact.

The fundamental facts of the Easter story can well be perceived. Though a different

estimate of the records may displace the conception as to details, on the whole there should be an agreement in all parts as to the established fact. We cannot go further back than to the oldest belief of the Church. Whoever thinks that he must deny it all value, and prefers to put his own constructions in its place, should be conscious that this means to resign historical knowledge. But in the case of an event which evidently has produced the most powerful historical effect, it should not be impossible to find trustworthy traces.

III

EXPLANATIONS OF THE HISTORICAL FACTS

BRIEFLY condensing the historically demonstrable facts of the Easter events, the following can be stated. The disciples, most deeply affected by the death of the Lord and not knowing what to make of his Messiahship, on the third day after the Crucifixion, and later on more frequently, believed that they had seen Jesus in Jerusalem and elsewhere, risen from the grave to a new, glorified life. One can admit this without either sharing the belief of the disciples or opposing it. It concerns here only the acknowledgment of an historical fact, which, allowing small deductions, cannot at all be discredited in its reality. The church-historical, yea, the world-historical importance which the faith of the disciples has obtained presses to further inquiry; more yet, the religious interest which is attached to the testimony of the disciples. How did they obtain the certainty that Jesus rose from

the dead? Is their belief based on a real, outward event, and if so, of what nature is it? Or, has a change merely taken place in their consciousness, which may have been caused by outward circumstances, but has not in it its real, last reason? Analogy with like phenomena induces the sceptic to explain the origin of the faith of the disciples in a purely natural way. The opponents of Christianity have pursued that course from the oldest times of the church. In modern times even members of the church have followed them, and today it is a settled fact in large circles that an explanation wholly precluding the miraculous of the resurrection belief may well be consistent with Christianity. A careful examination of this question is the more urgently needed.

Two views formerly emphasized, have now disappeared. According to the fraud theory the disciples did not believe in the resurrection of Jesus, but as the evil report of the Jews (Matt. 28. 13, 15) asserted, knowingly invented the resurrection of the Lord. This could be expected from them only if one misjudged their moral sincerity so evident in all the writings of the New

Testament, and ignored the sufferings which they had to endure just because of their faith in the Risen Lord. The swoon theory asserted that when Jesus was taken from the cross, he was not yet quite dead and that he revived to a new life in the cool sepulcher. But it did not answer the question how the half-dead could appear to the disciples as the conqueror of death, and what had finally become of him. Both attempts of explication must be considered as wholly abortive because they are opposed from the very start by every historical probability. To deal further with them were labor thrown away. Only two interpretations of the facts are to be taken seriously. They agree in that they transfer the appearances of Jesus exclusively to the consciousness of the disciples, but they entirely differ in the derivation of these phenomena. According to the one these Christophanies are only a reflection of the dispositions and views of the disciples (subjective vision theory). By the other they are considered as an effect of God and Christ on the consciousness of the disciples (objective vision theory). While formally agreeing these expositions differ much materially, and

must be treated singly, though many things which concern the one apply also to the other.

THE CHRISTOPHANIES AS A MERE REFLECTION OF THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE DISCIPLES

As the church history of all centuries shows, mighty religious movements were frequently accompanied by visionary phenomena. Individuals or larger circles have not seldom heard heavenly voices, seen angels, saints, or departed dead who gave them commissions and encouraged them to action. The supposition is offered that the Christophanies of the disciples must also thus be considered; their seeing of the Risen One was only the result of their continual mental occupation concerning the Lord, whose picture had indelibly impressed itself upon their souls. Some peculiarities of the Easter accounts could thus be easily explained, but the question is whether, on the whole, this does justice to the historical facts.

Visionary appearances usually presuppose

an over-excitement of the mental and physical life. Sometimes a diseased condition is the cause, sometimes the disposition to ecstasy rests on extraordinary bodily or mental exertion and fatigue. The attempt has often been made to point out a physical disposition to visions on the part of the disciples of Jesus, but this is a daring undertaking. It may lawfully be admissible to make a medical diagnosis of a man after 2,000 years on the basis of scanty and often disputed records. But at any rate one should not make the disciples run as fast as possible first to Galilee and then, a long time after Easter have experienced visions there when one must imagine in them a special asthenia of the nervous system. In Galilee their affected mind could sooner be quieted than in Jerusalem, where everything recalled the fearful events of Monday, Tuesday, and Good Friday, and where fear for one's own safety enhanced mental excitement. But it does not pay to dispute about possibilities which completely recede before careful examination.

A serious consideration against the vision theory is this, that the disciples must have

imagined that they must consider the appearances of the Lord as real events. In a dream we imagine that everything is real which happens to us, and when we suddenly awake a few minutes may pass before we realize that we have been only dreaming. But the quiet insight comes without fail. In like manner it should have happened to the disciples had the seeing of the Risen Lord been of a visionary kind. During the period of ecstasy they might well have thought they saw Jesus bodily, heard his words, touched his body; but afterward they would become conscious that they had seen a vision. But the question ought to have come to them at once whether what they had seen in a vision could lay claim to full reality. It would be correct to state that Peter, after awakening from the vision, considered the sheet filled with all manner of unclean beasts (Acts 10. 10-19, 28), as no more really existing than Paul did the Macedonian who invited him to come to Europe (Acts 16. 9). The more frequently the apostles had visions, the more able they would be to discern between vision and reality (comp. Acts 12. 9-11). One can here only avail himself of

the supposition that later tradition, as it is extant in our Gospels, has transferred to the outer world what the original witnesses experienced and announced only as mental events. Ostensibly one can refer here to Paul. In 1 Cor. 15. 5-8, he speaks of the self-manifestations of Christ in a term which is indeed sometimes used of visions. But Paul himself makes it evident that he did not consider the appearances of the Risen Christ as mere visions. His own experience before Damascus is proof of that. We will not withal refer to the Acts of the Apostles, which in its three narratives of the conversion of Paul (Acts 9. 1-9; 22. 3-11; 26. 4-18) presupposes that his companions had possibly also received an impression of the self-manifestation of Christ, and records that Paul in consequence of the brightness of the appearance had lost his sight. The opposition party would find here also a later description. Paul himself accurately distinguishes the experience before Damascus from the visions which he frequently had afterward. Of these he did not like to speak (2 Cor. 12. 1-5) and never made use of them in his preaching. But the appearances

of the Lord before Damascus he treats as a unique manifestation by which he became convinced in an indubitable manner of the bodily resurrection of the Lord and of his glorified life (1 Cor. 9. 1; 15. 8; comp. Gal. 2. 16). From this follows *a posteriori*, a conclusion for the appearances which the disciples had. As surely as Paul was convinced that he had seen the Risen Christ in bodily form, so surely did he also consider the seeing of the first disciples not as a mere vision, not as a purely mental picture.

It is usually objected to that the special value of the first appearances of Jesus rests on this, that in them the disciples thought they saw the Lord on earth, whereas he was seen later only in heaven. On this account Paul did not mention the vision of Stephen, which was so highly important for him (Acts 7. 51 seq.), among the appearances he records in 1 Cor. 15. But this expedient is abortive in every respect. It does not answer the question why it is that after a certain point of time the disciples did not expect to see Christ again on earth, but only in heaven; besides, it completely ignores the actual fact. On the Damascus road Paul

saw Jesus not on earth but in heaven, and he nevertheless was convinced that he saw him bodily. Reversedly, in a later vision he saw the Lord by his side (Acts 23. 11), and Luke, who narrates this, sees therein nothing conflicting with his account of the ascension (Acts 2. 3-11). It is not the place where one sees Christ but the manner in which he is seen which establishes the distinction between those first fundamental appearances and the later visions.

To this difference the fact also points that the self-manifestations of Jesus were made only to a considerably small number of people and ceased entirely after a certain time. Visionary movements as a rule are more intensive and lasting. In the persecution which began immediately after the founding of the church and increased afterward, an increase of visions would have been more likely than their rapid disappearance. We hear nothing of any attempt on this account to obtain appearances of the Lord. No one undertook to bring about visions by fasting and asceticism. They were ever reserved as special favors of the Lord. Under the supposition of the vision

theory this is just as strange as the isolated appearance and rapid ending of the appearances.

With all this we have not yet touched the main question: How is the accomplishment of Christophanies in the disciples to be explained? A vision occurs only when one is constantly occupied with an object. It does not bring before the spiritual eye entirely strange pictures in an arbitrary manner, but uses ideas which already exist in the mind. Perhaps it brings the solution of a question with which the mind had already busied itself for a long time. It does not offer something wholly unexpected, something which lies completely outside the horizon. If the Easter appearances were visions of this kind, faith in the Risen One did not produce them, but their expectations. The disciples must at least have already asked themselves whether the Lord had not, after all, come again to life. The faith must have already been nascent, perhaps yet almost unconscious, and came into view only with the appearance of the Risen Lord. Vision does not convince the unbeliever but it confirms the believer.

How little the Easter narratives fit here is obvious. The doubt of the disciples plays in them an important part, and the appearances of Jesus always come unexpectedly and surprisingly. This instance may be put aside by the assertion that one has to deal here with perspicuous apologetics. But to all doubt in the resurrection the church opposed the assurance that the disciples had by no means credulously become victims of fraud or self-deception; it was rather with difficulty that they could be convinced of the certainty of the appearances of Christ. But this criticism does not suffice to put aside a fact attested by the apostle Paul. Among the appearances in 1 Cor. 15. 5-8, he mentions one to James, evidently the brother of the Lord (Gal. 1. 19; 2. 9, 12). Before the death of Jesus we never meet with James among the disciples of the Lord. According to John 8. 5 his brethren did not believe on him, and the same idea causes the narrative in Mark 3. 21, according to which the friends of Jesus went out to lay hold of him, for they said, "He is beside himself." Soon after Easter (Acts 1. 14) and later on (1 Cor. 9. 5) the brethren of the Lord belong to

the congregation of the believers in the Messiah. This change can hardly be explained in any other way than that it had been brought about by the appearance which James experienced. We have therefore to deal here with a seeing which has faith not as a cause, but as an effect.

This is still more decidedly the case with Paul. True, efforts have been made to show by a careful psychological inquiry that the conditions existed in him which could and must lead to a Christ vision. But this is in complete contradiction to Paul's own statements. Of doubts in the correctness of his service under the law and of his good conscience in persecuting zeal, of which so much is made in modern descriptions of the conversion of the apostle, he knew nothing himself. He states rather that until the time when it pleased God to reveal his Son in him he had advanced in Judaism and become a fanatical persecutor of the church (Gal. I. 13-16). Also the touching description of the conflict between *to will* and *to perform* (Rom. 7. 7-25) can only be adduced as a natural explanation of his conversion when one forgets that in this section we have the

statement of a Christian about his condition without Christ, not the confession of a still unbelieving Pharisee. It is certain that a deeply founded love of truth and a rare religio-moral seriousness had already distinguished the persecutor Paul; but with this the disposition for a visionary seeing of the Risen Christ was not given. The suddenness and force of his inner change were also wholly unintelligible, had long preparation paved the way for his conversion.

Not only James and Paul, but the first apostles also, offer no sufficient cause for the origin of Christ visions. How, in the course of thirty-six hours, the disciples should have come from the deepest hopelessness to the most joyous certainty that Jesus lives, remains an unsolved problem. Had a slowly germinating belief in Easter grown into gradual maturity, it would not have led to visions. But in the event that faith had come suddenly it is incomprehensible how the change could have taken place in so short a time. It is questionable whether the vision theory can escape this dilemma.

How does it suggest that the Easter belief originated? We receive no uniform

answer. Most pleasing is the assumption that the impression of the person of Jesus upon his disciples had been so marked that his picture accompanied them day and night. The contrast between the unique grandeur and the awful fate of the Lord was continually with them, and finally found its solution in a vision. But such a development would have required more time than the space of hardly two days, and the question how the disciples came to this conviction at the moment of the resurrection of Jesus, is eluded. The disciples must have had a certain basis to accept something so extraordinary. Here predictive words and types of the Old Testament, like Psalm 16; Isa. 53; Jonah 2. 1; Hos. 6. 2, seem to offer themselves in explanation; but they are too indefinite to have originated the Easter belief. Only when other proof existed for the disciples that Jesus was risen was their attention directed to those testimonies of the Old Testament (comp. John 2. 22; 20. 9). The same applies to Jesus's own prediction of his resurrection. The behavior of the disciples in those critical days sufficiently shows that those prophetic words of the

Lord had made no impression upon them. Besides, Mark clearly states that the disciples first of all did not know what to do with Jesus's prophecy of the resurrection (Mark 9. 10; comp. John 2. 22).

With greater reason one could refer to the empty sepulcher. The disappearance of the body of Jesus could have indeed awakened the thought of the resurrection of the Lord. In itself it would rather have led to the assumption of a displacing of the body (comp. John 20. 2, 15), but belief in a bodily resurrection of eminent men of God was much propagated at that time. Thus Herod thought that the Baptist executed by him had again appeared in the person of Jesus; and in the Lord the people variously beheld one of the former prophets who had to come to life again (Mark 6. 14; 8. 27 seq.). But we must not here overlook an important difference. The popular opinion presupposed in all these cases a return to the earthly mode of existence; whereas, from the beginning the disciples were convinced that Jesus was risen to a glorified life. Still more important is another circumstance. Herod and the masses were only led to the thought

of a resurrection of the dead by the extraordinary miracles of Jesus; the wonderful deeds wrought by him demanded an unusual explanation. Thus it was supposed that Jesus must have previously lived in a higher world. This conclusion however completely ceased in the minds of the disciples in those days after the Crucifixion; their hope, that in Jesus the Messiah had appeared, seemed to have been thoroughly refuted. Then they recognized also that no miraculous intervention had taken place which could have served or upheld their faith. Nothing had happened which required a supernatural explanation. The cross seemed to have destroyed their expectations forever. There was no reason to suppose that Jesus was risen.

Instead of recommending the vision theory, the empty sepulcher rather refutes it. The question how the body of Jesus had disappeared no critic has answered satisfactorily. The tradition had certainly nothing to do with it. It had no power to dispose of the body, and at any rate, it would not have omitted to refute the resurrection sermon of the disciples by a reference to the

real whereabouts of the body had it been in a position to do so. We might sooner think that Joseph of Arimathea might have transferred the body, which for the time being was in his tomb, to another place. But for a length of time this could not have been hidden from the disciples, even if Joseph's connection with the congregation had only been a very loose one. From the standpoint of the vision theory, nothing remains but to think of some inexplicable accident.

In recent times Babylonian mythology has also been called to explain the belief in the resurrection. The temporary disappearance and reappearance of the stars, like the withering and flourishing of the vegetation, has variously been presented in Oriental religions as a death and resurrection of the gods. An immediate transference of these notions to Jesus is indeed not to be thought of. It is supposed, therefore, that in view of the syncretism of that time, such ideas were natural to Judaism, and what long ago had been predicted of the Messiah, the disciples applied to the person of Jesus. Were such the case the idea of a Christ who died and rose again should have been the common

property of Judaism, or at least of some of its circles; that such cannot have been the case is sufficiently proved by the reception which the preaching of the Crucified One has found among the Jews. How much this must also be applied to the disciples has been already shown from their behavior concerning the passion-prophecies of Jesus. The Christian Easter faith besides leads much farther than the Babylonian resurrection myths: here the question is always of a revival which is followed by a new dying. Hope does not go beyond the orbit of life. But the disciples of Jesus were convinced that the Christ who rose from the dead is no more to die, but is once for all removed from the power of death (Rom. 6. 9). To such resurrection belief the Babylonian religion never rose.

THE CHRISTOPHANIES AS THE WORK OF GOD AND CHRIST ON THE CONSCIOUS- NESS OF THE DISCIPLES

The undeniable defects of the vision theory in its setting thus far treated have resulted in giving to it a different turn.

Prominent thinkers conceived the appearances of the Risen Lord as visions whose origin are not to be sought in the imagination of the disciples, but in the work of God and Christ. In this way the revelation character of the appearances is preserved, and to the conviction of the disciples that Jesus truly lives, a divine security is given. But this does not explain what induced the disciples to distinguish the first appearances of the Risen One from later Christ visions, and the empty sepulcher remains still an unsolved problem. Besides, we cannot see the necessity of such visions. The belief of the disciples in the person of Jesus was too deeply rooted for the death sentence of the Sanhedrin to have made them doubt the divine sending of the Lord. Without visions they firmly believed that the spirit of Jesus was safe in the hands of God, like that of all the pious ones and prophets of the Old Testament. To perform unnecessary miracles is not the way of God; and the appearances of the Risen Jesus had actually given to the disciples much more than the confidence that Jesus's life was not extinguished. The advantage of this form of

the vision theory is in the removal of the difficulties which lie in the idea of a resurrection body. Many indissoluble questions cease as soon as one supposes that, in consequence of their other views, the disciples referred a purely spiritual self-attestation of the Lord to a being risen to a bodily life. In the vision they could have seen, heard and touched Jesus, as the accounts of the Gospels presuppose, without therefore inferring a corresponding corporality. But this is only a seeming advantage. We can just as little get an idea of a real, personal existence which is detached from all conditions of the earthly-bodily life, as of a resurrection-body. Our entire existence is so dependent upon the conditions of the sensuous world, that only a shadowy existence seems to remain when we leave out the material. How thinking, volition and feeling are possible without brains and nerves, besides how effect upon others can take place without bodily mediation is entirely beyond our comprehension. The self-attestations of Christ are made more intelligible by giving up his bodily resurrection; by putting a merely imagined and constructed miracle in

the place of one historically accredited. The objective vision theory is the effort to mediate between the apostolic testimony and modern criticism, which really does no justice to either of the factors.

THE CHRISTOPHANIES AS DEMONSTRATING THE BODILY RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

Thus remains that explanation of the fact which the New Testament presupposes throughout, the acknowledgment of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. True, this too leaves many questions open; above all the glorified personality of the Risen Christ is to us a mysterious and absolutely inconceivable quality¹; but the question is whether on this account it must also be unreal. We, whose life is limited to time and space, can have no conception of an existence which is without these limits; and yet, the very noblest and best in our life points beyond the visible world to a higher order of things in

¹ It may be mysterious, but certainly not "inconceivable." The mysterious and as yet incomprehensible nature of ether, its laws and qualities, is very suggestive from a purely scientific point of view.—EDITOR.

which the glaring dissonances of the spiritual and bodily existence are resolved into harmony. In different ways the attempt has been made to bring within our comprehension the peculiar nature of the body of the risen Christ. It has been assumed that only for the time being the body of Jesus received the form in which he became visible, or some facts especially offensive to our philosophic thinking were credited to the account of tradition, which formed certain events more concretely. All these are suppositions without any certain foundation, because we have no rule for estimating things which are absolutely beyond our experience. It is true that not all who were present at the appearances of the Risen One, perceived one and the same thing. The Lord was known by the disciples only so far as he made himself known, and their eyes were opened for the seeing of him. But one thing was at all times certain: that the Lord had really and bodily come to them, proved himself alive to them, and gave them directions for their present work. We stand here before a miracle which precludes every natural explanation. Whoever thinks that

he must refuse such a one from the start, would do the same if the historical attestation of the resurrection of Jesus were even more evident and tangible than it actually was. Whether one acknowledges a miracle or not is a matter of one's view of life and faith, not of historical judgment and scientific inquiry. The decision on the miracle of the resurrection of Jesus depends in the end on whether one shares the religious comprehensive view of the Bible, and especially what importance one ascribes to the person of Jesus. The resurrection of the Lord is and remains, therefore, an article of faith.

IV

THE MEANING OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

WE must consider the resurrection of Jesus from its historical effects. Without the Easter experience the disciples had never found the courage to preach Jesus as the Messiah to all the world. The Christian church would never have been founded, and the course of the history of the world would consequently have been led into entirely different paths. As far as we can survey the past there is no event of such comprehensive reach as this fact, which, however, does not make the resurrection of Jesus an object of faith. It could be a certainty to us that it is the most important event in the history of the world and yet not obtain any relation to our personal life.

It is otherwise when we perceive in the resurrection of the Lord a deed of God, a sign which is given to us in support of our faith. Thus it becomes a manifestation of the power of God which overcomes death,

and holds out to us prospects of restoration from the state of death.¹

* * * * *

The resurrection of Jesus has a decisive importance for us when we consider its bearing upon the person of the Lord. Jesus intended not to be merely a pattern of faith and love; he appeared not merely as a prophet who proclaimed the decree of God and enjoins the commandments of God. He claimed to be the Messiah of his people, the Lord of the church, yea, the Saviour of the world. He demanded belief in his person and attested that in him God has approached humanity as nowhere else. Was he not asking too much by this? He may have devoted himself to God with the whole fervor of a religious genius and consumed his life in the service of love, but in this one point should he not have paid the inevitable tribute to the notions of his people and time by estimating the significance of his life in the form of the Messianic consciousness, and thereby necessarily overrating it? To such questions

¹ The author here branches off to express opinions not exactly germane to the critical inquiry he has been pursuing, and they are for that reason omitted.—EDITOR.

of doubt the resurrection of Jesus gives us a divine answer. In it the Father acknowledged the Son and put upon his life and work the seal of divine attestation.

Even with this the most important is not yet said. Had Jesus remained in the grave, an after effect upon the millenniums of history might have proceeded. His word and example would not cease to influence humanity and hold before it high ideals of love to God and fellow-man, but the person of Jesus himself would be nevertheless a quantity of the past. The dead can no more interfere with the earthly life. He could no more assert his will and assist later generations in their new relations with word and deed. Never-resting history passes over him, to be led by new personalities to new tasks and new goals. Here lies the real nucleus of the Easter message. It concerns the question of the lasting importance of the person of Christ. If Jesus be not risen, he may be an important factor in the history of the Kingdom of God, but he is not the everlasting head of the church. He may give us a powerful impulse to faith, but he cannot be the object of faith and adoration.

We cannot trust in him as our Redeemer, nor call upon him as our Lord; we have nothing to expect from him; only fanatics could rely on him. In the opposite case, the resurrection of Jesus gives us the certainty that a lasting communion is consummated between us and God. In him humanity has its representative before God. In his death Christ not only established a new relation to God, but continually assured also to everyone in his weakness his continuous connection with God. More perfectly than during his earthly life is he now the executor of the divine decree of salvation to the world, the Lord who, exalted to the participation in God's government of the world, governs the course of his church and leads everyone to faith. With Jesus's resurrection an entirely new prospect is opened to humanity. With him its head, it finds itself in a new relation to God. In his person it has the pledge for the forgiveness of its sin and for the attainment of the appointment given to it by God. In him it sees the creative will of God most gloriously realized, and that, by it, the final victory over death is also guaranteed.

Thus indeed the entire state of faith and

salvation of the Church is attached to the confession :

“On the third day he rose again from the dead.”

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Riggenbach, Edward

Resident of Tarry

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